**Limerence**

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# Limerence

by self_simp

Summary

Limerence: The state of being infatuated or obsessed with another person, typically experienced involuntarily and characterized by a strong desire for reciprocation of one's feelings but not primarily for a sexual relationship.

# Chapter 1

### Flashforward

Hannibal smiled in a friendly way as he stepped forward to kill me.

I'd never given much thought to how I would die- though I'd had reason enough, spending these last few months with a cannibalistic serial killer- but even if I had thought about it, I couldn't have imagined this.

The beauty. The love I felt for Hannibal, even in this moment. My friend, enemy, lover- and now murderer. I loved him. He completed me. My life started when I met him, and now it would end with him. He is my beginning and my end.

I'd never given much thought to how I would die- now, it seemed, I would have to.

# Chapter 2

*I shoot Mr. Marlow twice, severing jugulars and carotids with near-surgical precision. He will die watching me take what is his away from him.*

*This is my design.*

*Mrs. Marlow's sobbing sounds from the living room nearby, she is jabbing buttons frantically on the home security device.*

*She slowly turns to me in horror.*

*I shoot her expertly through the neck. This is not a fatal wound. The bullet misses every artery, she's paralyzed before it leaves her body.*

*Which… doesn't mean she can't feel pain. It just means. She can't do. Anything. About it.*

*This is my design.*

~~~

"I need the incident report from the home security company?" I briefly glanced through the contents of the folder handed to me. "This was recorded as a false alarm…" The date caught my eye. "This was recorded as a false alarm last… week."

Last week.

I handed the folder back. "He tapped their phone."
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*A man's voice comes from the device on the wall. "This is DDX Security, who am I speaking with?"*

*I play the recording. "Theresa Marlow." But Theresa Marlow is still lying paralyzed on the floor.*

*"Can you please confirm your password for security purposes?"*

*"Tea kettle."*

*"Thank you, Mrs. Marlow. We detected a front door alarm?"*

*"Yes, sorry about that."*

*"Is there anyone in the house with you at this time, Mrs. Marlow?"*

*"I'm just here with my husband."*

*"Do you require any further assistance?"*

*"No. Thank you so much for calling."*

*And this is when it gets truly horrifying for Mrs. Marlow.*

"Everyone has thought about killing someone, one way or another." I stood in front of the class, hoping my cynical words would wipe off the bored looks from their faces. "Be it by your own hand or the hand of God." I clicked to the next slide that displayed the woman's

head lying in a pool of blood. "Now *think* about killing Mrs. Marlow. Why did she deserve this? Tell me *your* design." I closed the laptop that sat on the podium in front of me. "Tell me who you are." With these final words, the students knew that class was dismissed and began to clamor loudly out of the room, eager to leave.

Like clockwork, the tall man who had been stood at the entrance of my classroom for a quite while now, approached my stand.

"Mr. Graham." He smiled at me in greeting. Despite his friendly face and demeanor, I was suspicious of him. He carried himself with too much authority, and he had too much weight behind his eyes. Clearly a cop. No… something else. FBI?

"Special Agent Jack Crawford." He introduced himself, and I instantly recognized the name. *Dammit, it's this asshole* . "I head the Behavioral Science Unit."

"We've met." I told him coldly, making an excuse to avoid his eyes by slowly sliding my laptop into its bag.

"Yes. We had a disagreement when we opened up the museum." He replied, as if he'd just remembered, but I knew he hadn't, otherwise why would he be here?

"I 'disagreed' with what you named it." I felt an unwelcome sweat start to break out on my brow. This was a subject I had strong opinions on, and I wished he would stop talking before I started an argument that I definitely wouldn't win.

He stepped behind the podium, closer to me. "The Evil Minds Research Museum." He pried, clearly trying to get a reaction out of me. *Can this guy just leave already?*

I scoffed, trying- and probably failing- to feign indifference. "It's a little hammy, Jack."

"I see you've hitched your horse to a teaching post." He changed the subject, glancing up at the wall that, a minute ago, projected an image of a corpse. He leaned forward

conspiratorially. I felt his breath on my face and tried not to flinch. “I also understand it’s difficult for you to be… social.”

I knew immediately what he was getting at and immediately all my old defenses went up. “Well, I- I’m just talking at them.” I tried to adjust my glasses but my hands were shaking so bad I ended up skewing them crookedly down my face. “I’m not listening to them.” I insisted. “It’s not social.”

“I see.” He said, clearly not believing me. He didn’t see, he didn’t, but could anyone really be expected to? “May I?” He asked and without waiting for a response, he reached forward and adjusted my glasses. I felt like a toddler that couldn’t perform basic motor functions. “Where do you fall on the spectrum?” He asked me, and I supposed I had to applaud his directness, now that he was finally getting to the point.

“My h- horse is hitched to a post,” I stuttered as I scrambled desperately to save my dignity. “That is closer to asperger’s and autistics than, ah, narcissists and sociopaths.” I resume packing up my belongings.

“But you can *empathize* with narcissists and sociopaths-”

“I- I can empathize with anybody.” I cut him off hurriedly. “It’s less to do with a *personality disorder* ,” Giving up on organization, and just wanting to get out of there more than anything, I started haphazardly shoving papers into my bag. “Than an active imagination.”

He leaned forward again. “Can I… borrow your imagination?”

Ah.

There it was.

He was trying to pull me back into the world I had tried so hard to escape. I *had* escaped it.

But, he had come looking for me.

He had to be desperate to come for me. If there was anyone else he could go to, he would have.

I'm his last resort, and therefore…

He has a case he knows no one else can crack but me.

# Chapter 3

This was the time of day when I most wished I was capable of sleep.

When the last patient of the day leaves and there's nothing to do but wait until nightfall to begin hunting.

Technically, there was nothing stopping me from hunting in the daytime. Sure, there was the added risk of witnesses, but my vampiric strength could easily overcome any mere mortal. It was simply more of a hassle than I was in the mood for most nights, particularly this one. I was tired. My last patient had been Franklyn, a whiny man who acted entirely more familiar than one should be with one's psychiatrist. I found him increasingly more exhausting the more appointments I had with him.

I stared at the senseless scratches I had made on the paper in front of me vaguely depicting a male form, imagining patterns that weren't there. I wasn't feeling particularly inspired today, which was annoying, considering art was one of the primary ways I tuned out the voices that babbled like the gush of a river inside of my head.

My telepathy had only gotten stronger with age. I could clearly hear the receptionist down the hall and all the people on the street below. Normally, the office being empty except for one other person, the noise wouldn't be this bad. However, today, everything seemed to be grating on my nerves. I briefly pondered tracking down and killing Franklyn, despite the added risk of his connection to me.

I knew instantly when the policeman entered the lobby downstairs. I laid down my pencil and closed my eyes, listening.

"Agent Jack Crawford, FBI." he introduced himself to the receptionist. I, at once, was on edge. However, his tone was friendly and I saw his wide smile in the receptionist's mind. Whatever his business was, it did not appear to be an urgent matter. "I'd like to speak to Dr. Lecter."

I continued listening carefully as the receptionist directed him towards my office. I heard him whistling an unfamiliar tune as he strode down the hall. Heavy, confident footsteps- a promising trait in certain people. In the powerful, it was a sign of leadership.

In ones who only *think* they are powerful, however, it has the tendency to indicate presumptuousness.

I could not decide which category to sort this Jack Crawford into.

I met him at the door, careful to wait for him to knock before opening it. It's a nasty habit I have that I've never been able to completely kick: opening doors for people before I'm supposed to know they're there.

"Dr. Lecter." He greeted me, offering his hand.

"Hello." I responded politely. "You do not appear to be one of my patients." I kept up the facade that I did not know exactly what he was here for.

"Oh! Dr. Lecter, I'm sorry." He fished around in his jacket pocket for a moment. "I'm Special Agent Jack Crawford." He finally held up his badge. "May I come in?"

"Please." I gestured. As he stepped past I was caught off guard by his scent. Strong and musky and peppery. Almost involuntarily, I took a big gulp of air into my mouth, holding the scent hungrily in my nose, my sinuses, my brain, *delicious* -

He wasn't presumptuous. In a way, his scent, and subsequently his mind, was consistent with all the other cops I've ever met. But, there was something different about his scent.

The effect was similar, but the source was not the same at all- the way mint and basil are similar in their sharpness, but could never be mistaken for the same taste.

*Finally* , something different. I longed to taste the complexities of his mind in his blood.

It couldn't have been more than a second or two that I was distracted by these thoughts. His back was still turned so he couldn't see the hunger that was surely evident in my eyes.

He had no idea what I was thinking at that moment. It occasionally hits me how *vulnerable* humans are. Such easy prey…

But, a cop would surely put up more of a fight. I thought of his heart pumping faster and faster, squeezing hot blood through the veins all over his body. I could see a faint one snaking across the back of his hand.

Killing this man would be much more trouble than it would be worth. Surely I could find another… I cast a longing look out the window at the darkening sky. It's been too long since I've had an *actual* feast.

"So. May I ask why I'm getting a visit from the FBI?"

"You can ask." He had a teasing tone as he jabbed a finger in my direction. "But, I might have to ask *you* a few questions first." I smiled politely and nodded. "You expecting another patient?" He asked me.

I shook my head. "We are all alone."

"Oh. Good." He continued to pace around my spacious office, admiring my various knicknacks.

Jack walked over to my drawing table. "Wooow." He lifted a paper up off the desk. "Are these yours, Doctor?"

“Among the first.” I told him, pointing to a drawing of a ornate building. “My boarding school in Paris when I was a boy.” I explained to him.

“The amount of detail is *incredible* .”

I picked up a wooden pencil from the desk and showed him it's fine tip. “I learned very early that a scalpel cuts better points than a pencil sharpener.”

“Well, now I understand why your drawings earned you an internship at Johns Hopkins.” He complimented me, still with the amiable smile on his face. Buttering me up to spill all my secrets.

Well, it would take more than that to get anything out of me. “I’m beginning to suspect you’re investigating me.” I looked at him, Faux- accusatory. “Agent Crawford.”

“Oh, no, no.” He chuckled, pacing the room. “No, you were referred to me by Alana Bloom in the psychology department in Georgetown.” He explained.

“Most psychology departments are filled with personality deficients.” He laughed a little at that. “Dr. Bloom would be the exception.”

“Yes, she would.” He agreed. “Yes, she would...” He got distracted briefly, still looking around at my office, but quickly came back to himself. “Well, she told me that you mentored her during her residency at Johns Hopkins.”

“I learned as much from her as she did from me.”

“She also showed me your paper. Evolutionary Origins of… uhhh… Social Exclusion?” I nodded. “Very interesting. *Very* interesting. Even for a layman.”

“A layman.”

“Yes.”

“So many fellows going about the halls of Behavioral Science at the FBI. And you consider yourself a layman.”

“I do when I’m in *your* company, Doctor.” He was really laying it in thick, wasn't he? “I need you to help me with a psychological profile.”

I raised an eyebrow. “On?”

“Doctor, are you familiar with the Chesapeake Ripper?”

“Yes, of course.” I responded gravely. “Sadistic bastard, wasn’t he?” I laughed internally. *Sadistic bastard, who would do such horrible things, certainly not I…*

Crawford nodded.

I cooncentrated and I could see, buried deep in his mind, the extreme weight and responsibility he carried because of his job. The darkness he’d seen. All the darkness he’d failed to put a stop to over the course of his career. In a brief flash, I saw a young, brunette woman with a badge hanging around her neck.

Ah… I was starting to understand now. The presumptuousness was not arrogance, it was an extremely selfless sense of duty. To what? His job? That young woman?

“We have reason to believe he’s started up again. Will you help me?”

Oh, this should be *fun* .

# Chapter 4

**Will POV**

“Eight girls,” Jack told me as we walked from campus. “Abducted from eight different Minnesota campuses. All in the last eight months.” The clatter of noisy college students surrounded us at all sides. God, I hated noisy college students.

“I thought there were seven.”

“There were.”

“When did you tag the eighth?”

“About three minutes before I walked into your lecture hall.”

“So, you’re calling them abductions because you don’t have any bodies?”

“No bodies, no parts of bodies, nothing that comes out of bodies.” Jack ticked them off on his fingers, growing visibly more agitated as he spoke. “Nothing.”

“Then, those girls weren’t taken from where you think they were taken.” I told him simply, feeling his stare boring into the side of my skull. Most people were put off at my confidence. Interpreted it as narcissism. But, it wasn’t narcissistic if I was right.

“Then where were they taken from?”

“I don’t know. Someplace else.”

We continued the conversation in his office.

“All of them were abducted on a Friday so they wouldn’t have to be reported missing until Monday. Now, however he’s covering his tracks.” He gestured to a corkboard covered in red string. “He needs a weekend to do it.”

He handed me a photo with a strained sigh. A dark-haired girl, college age. “Number eight?” I asked.

“Elise Nichols. St. Cloud State on the Mississippi. Disappeared on Friday, was supposed to house-sit for her parents over the weekend, feed the cat… she never made it home.”

“One through seven are dead, don’t you think? He’s not keeping them around. He… got himself a new one.”

“So we focus on Elise Nichols.” I nodded and set my attention on the corkboard, taking in the photos of the girls attached to string, attached to places on the map.

“They’re all very…” I looked at each photo. Dark hair, dark eyes. Pale. “Mall of America. It’s a lot of wind-chafed skin.”

“Same hair color, same eye color.” He sighed exasperatedly again. “Roughly the same age. Same height, same weight. So… what is it about all of these girls?” He looked at me, thinly veiled desperation in his eyes.

“It’s not about all of these girls.” I looked at each one carefully. They could have been sisters. “It’s just about one of them. He’s like Willy Wonka. Every girl he takes is a candy bar, and hidden in amongst those candy bars is the one true, intended victim. Which… if we follow through on our metaphor, is our golden ticket.”

“So, is he warming up for his golden ticket or is he just- *reliving* whatever it is he did to her.” He looked with disgust at the corkboard. Imagining. And failing to imagine.

I shook my head. “The golden ticket wouldn’t be the first taken, and she wouldn’t be the last. He would *hide* how special she was. I mean, *I* would. Wouldn’t you?”

No. No, no, no. He was getting that look in his eyes. I knew that look. “I want you,” He held up a finger thoughtfully. “To get closer to this.”

“ *No* .” I was *not* going to do this to myself again. I wouldn’t. “You have Heimlich at Harvard and Bloom at Georgetown. They do the *same* thing I do.” Let other people have this job, this responsibility didn’t have to fall on me.

“That’s not exactly true, is it?”

*Shit, shit shit shit shit-*

“You have a *very specific* way of thinking about things.” He said, putting his hands in his pockets and standing tall.

“Ha. Has there been a lot of *discussion* about the specific way I think?” I hated having my brain analyzed, having everyone know what’s wrong with me, what a *freak* I am. I needed to get away-

“You make jumps you can’t explain, Will.”

“No, no- The *evidence* explains.”

“Then help me find some evidence.” Goddamn this man. He wouldn’t give up.

I hated how broken and *defeated* my voice sounded when I said: “That may require me to be… sociable.” That look in his eyes.

He knew he had won.

# Chapter 5

**Will POV**

**Duluth, Minnesota**

"S- She could've gone off by herself." Mr. Nichols said in an unsteady voice. "She was a very interior young woman-" I examined the baby photos on the mantel as the parents of Elise Nichols talked to Jack. "She didn't like living in her dorm. I could see how the pressure of school might have gotten to her." He paused, contemplating. "She likes trains. Maybe she just got on a train and-"

"She looks like the other girls." Mrs. Nichols interjected in a similarly shaky voice.

"Yes, she fits the profile." I heard Jack agree. I continued studying the room, looking, looking…

"Could Elise…" I could tell he almost dared not to ask it. "Still be alive?"

Jack took a breath before responding. "We simply have no way of knowing." Best not to give false hope.

"How's the cat?" I asked, turning around.

"What?" Mrs. Nichols blonde eyebrows pull together over her bloodshot eyes.

"How's your cat? Elise was supposed to feed it." I explained. "Was the cat… weird? When you came home? Must have been hungry… it didn't eat all weekend."

"I- I didn't notice." Mr. Nichols told me.

I nodded understandingly. I supposed that wouldn't be something you would notice when your daughter was missing.

Jack nodded and said: "Would you give us a moment, please?"

We walked into an adjacent room for some privacy and I whispered to Jack: "He took her from here. She got on a train, she came home, she fed the cat-" I nodded emphatically. "He took her from here."

Jack nodded gravely and pulled out his phone. "The Nichol's house is a crime scene." Mr. Nichols gasps. "I need ERT immediately. I want Zeller, Katz, and Jimmy Price." A pause. "Yes, and a photographer."

"Why is it now a crime scene?" Mr. Nichols demanded.

Jack hung up, looking at him, not saying anything.

"Can I see your daughter's room?" I asked.

"B-but police were up there this morning." He protested. He took me up anyway.

A gray tabby cat was pawing at the bottom of the door, mewling. Bad sign.

I quickly intercepted his hand reaching for the door handle. "I'll get that." I turned to him slowly, dreading. "Mr. Nichols, please put your hands in your pockets and avoid touching anything."

"But, w- we've been in and outta here all day!" He was still confused. In denial.

I looked down at the tabby staring up at me. “You can… hold the cat if it’s easier.” He did.

I pushed open the door, having a sinking feeling in my stomach that I knew what I would find.

There. On the bed. A girl, tucked in almost as if she was sleeping. But she wasn’t.

Dark hair, wind-chafed skin. Cold. Still.

“E-Elise-” I whipped around and grabbed Mr. Nichols by the shoulders.

“I need you to leave the room.” I told him carefully and calmly, but he didn’t hear me. Just kept staring past my shoulder in horror. The cat leapt out of his arms.

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“Take your time.” Jack told me. We were still standing in Elise’s bedroom. “When you’re ready to talk: you talk. If you don’t feel like it: you don’t talk.” His voice was gentle. Like trying to placate a frightened animal. I wondered what I looked like. “We’ll be downstairs, you let us know when you’re ready for us to come in.”

I stepped closer to the bed.

And imagine.

*I’m standing on the balcony. Watching. Elise Nichols is lying in her bed sleeping peacefully.*

*I pounce.*

“You’re Will Graham!” A voice behind me exclaimed, and I jumped.

“Y-You’re- you’re not supposed to be in here-” I stammer.

“You wrote the standard monograph by time of death by insect activity!” The woman exclaimed. She seemed to finally take in my distressed state. Really, she was behaving entirely unprofessionally, fangirling over me like this. “We found antler velvet in two of the wounds.” She gave me a once-over. “You uh, not real FBI?”

“I’m a- a Special Investigator.” I tried to regain my composure.

She raised her arched eyebrows. “ *Never* been an FBI agent?” She exclaimed incredulously.

“Um. S- strict. Strict screening procedures.”

“Detects instability.” She gives me another once-over. Scrutinizing me. Beholding my trembling form and all the freakish knowledge it contains. “You unstable?” She licks her lips looking at me like I’m a zoo animal. A fresh piece of intrigue. Drama.

Jack ended up showing up to save me. “Now, you know you’re not supposed to be in here.” He scolded.

“I found antler velvet in two of the wounds.” She plowed on. “Like she was gored. I was looking for velvet in the other wounds but I was interrupted-” She indicated me.

“Now, hold on.” A youthful man with a beard interrupted. “Look, deer and elk pin their prey, okay. They put all their weight into their antlers to try and suffocate their victim. That’s how they would kill like a fox or a coyote-”

“Alright, Elise Nichols was strangled, suffocated, her ribs are broken-” Jack started.

“Antler velvet is rich in nutrients. It actually promotes healing, he may have put it there on purpose.” I interjected.

“You think he was trying to heal her?” Jack seemed skeptical.

“He wanted to undo as much as he could- given that he’d already killed her.”

“He put her back where he found her.” Jack added, understanding.

I stared at the corpse. “Whatever he did to the others, he couldn’t do it to her.” I said thoughtfully.

“Is this his golden ticket?” Jack asked me.

“No.” I responded breathlessly. “No, no. This is an apology.”

The pounding in my head increased in frequency, making me wince. “Does anyone have any aspirin?”

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My headache had mostly died down by the time I was driving home. The silence and darkness of the road ahead of me and the trees calmed me some. But I was weary. I ached for the familiarity of my house and my dogs and my warm bed.

Something caught my eye out of my periphery. I recognized the gait of the animal instantly as canine. I eased on the break and rolled down the window.

A golden retriever was jogging along the road right beside me. “Hello.” I leaned out the window but the dog kept going forward. “Hey!”

I followed the dog for a while and eventually pulled over and got out. The cool air felt good on my skin. “Hey, come on- hey-” I kept trying to coax the dog but it was too skittish. Definitely someones lost pet, he had a leash dragging the ground behind him.

I tried to continue my drive home but ended up going back out with the passenger seat full of treats. I wasn’t the type to just leave him out there.

Once I opened the bag of treats, he instantly came trotting up to me and I eventually got him home with me.

“Everybody.” I said to the pack of dogs sitting obediently on my porch. “This is Winston.”

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